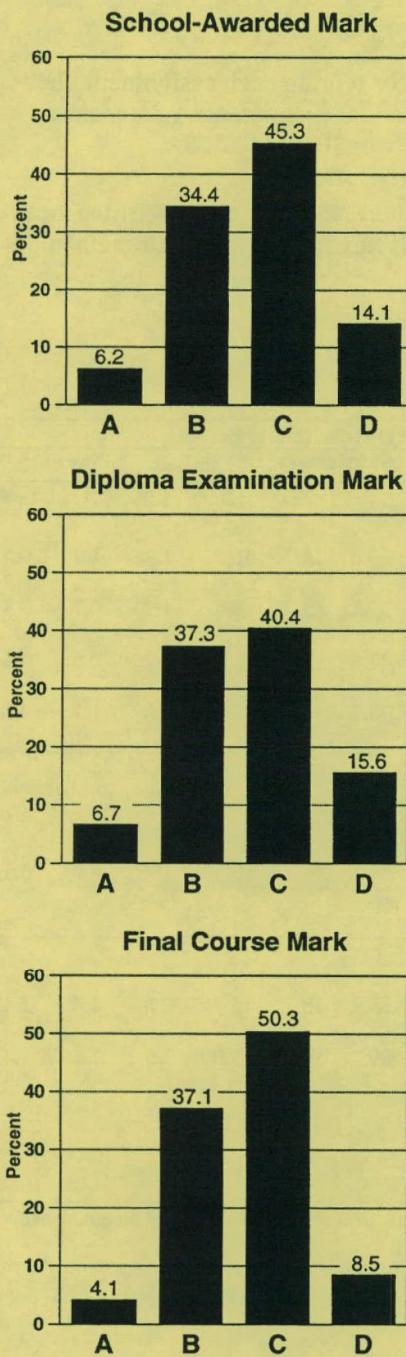


English 33

Diploma Examination Results Examiners' Report for June 1997



The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, students, and the public with an overview of results from the June 1997 administration of the English 33 Diploma Examination. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that have been provided to schools and school jurisdiction offices. A provincial report containing a detailed analysis of the combined November, January, June, and August results is made available annually.

Description of the Examination

The English 33 Diploma Examination consists of two parts: a written-response section and a reading section. Each section is worth 50% of the total examination mark.

Achievement of Standards

The information reported is based on the final course marks achieved by 6 796 students who wrote the June 1997 examination.

- 91.5% of these students achieved the acceptable standard (a final course mark of 50% or higher).
- 4.1% of these students achieved the standard of excellence (a final course mark of 80% or higher).

Generally, student achievement in relation to the acceptable standard in English 33 was satisfactory. The proportion of students achieving the acceptable standard was slightly lower than it was in January 1997, but slightly higher than it was in June 1996. The proportion of students achieving the standard of excellence was slightly lower than the proportion in January 1997 and June 1996. As in the past, few students in English 33 achieved the standard of excellence.

Provincial Averages

- The average school-awarded mark was 60.8%.
- The average diploma examination mark was 62.1%.
- The average final course mark, representing an equal weighting of the school-awarded mark and the diploma examination mark, was 62.0%.

Part A: Written Response

In responding to Part A, students are required to complete three writing assignments, each of which assesses a variety of writing and thinking skills.

Readers will find the results most meaningful in the context of the assignments and the scoring descriptors. The most useful starting place for reviewing the results is at the **3 Satisfactory** level. Such work exceeds the pass mark of 50%. The scoring criteria are provided in the 1996–97 *English 33 Information Bulletin, Diploma Examinations Program*.

The table below outlines the requirements for each assignment, the categories for scoring each assignment, the amount each category contributes to the total mark (Parts A and B combined), and the percentage of students achieving at the various levels. In June 1997, the average raw score for Part A was 30.3 out of 50.

By comparing school and jurisdiction results with provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint and Percentage Distribution of Scores

Description of the Writing Assignment	Scoring Category	Proportion of Total Mark(%)	Percentage Distribution of Scores														
			Excellent	Proficient	Satisfactory	Limited	Poor	5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	Ins*
Personal Response to Literature The student is required to read a piece of literature and to write a response from a personal perspective.	Thought and Detail	10.0	1.3	1.9	14.6	15.4	39.6	14.1	10.2	1.4	1.0	0.5					
	Organization	5.0	1.6	2.5	14.8	17.2	39.1	13.7	8.6	1.3	0.7	0.5					
	Matters of Choice	5.0	1.8	1.9	13.8	16.3	43.8	12.8	7.4	1.2	0.5	0.5					
	Matters of Correctness	5.0	1.6	2.5	14.6	17.0	34.5	14.8	11.7	1.8	1.1	0.5					
Functional Writing The student is required to write a response to a particular situation (e.g., a business letter or speech).	Thought and Detail	10.0	1.2	2.4	12.5	14.7	39.2	16.3	11.9	0.9	0.5	0.5					
	Writing Skills	5.0	1.5	1.9	12.5	15.2	37.8	15.7	12.3	1.7	0.9	0.5					
Response to Visual Communication The assignment asks the student to respond to a photograph. The student is required to write about main ideas in relation to techniques of visual communication.	Thought and Detail	5.0	1.2	1.7	9.0	11.8	35.3	18.7	15.7	2.8	1.4	2.4					
	Writing Skills	5.0	1.1	1.5	9.8	11.7	39.1	17.7	13.0	2.3	1.5	2.4					

***Ins** (Insufficient) is a special category that includes students who did not attempt the assignment, who wrote too little to evaluate, or who wrote answers that were completely off-topic.

Note: The shaded portion represents the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded the acceptable standard on each scoring category.

Examiners' Comments

Section I: Personal Response to Literature

The excerpt from "Revenge" was accessible to most students and evoked many thoughtful responses. Most students agreed with the narrator's opinion and developed their own variation of the thesis "we are strongly motivated by the need to prove ourselves." Some students recognized the difference between internal and external motivation.

Students developed ideas such as "No matter how secure one might be, the desire to gain further acceptance is always there. In sports, the arts, business and in academia, most people feel a need to prove themselves worthy," "It is human nature to want to be recognized," and "When we do things to prove ourselves, we conquer self-doubt."

Some students wrote about the potentially negative aspects of "proving oneself," one student noting that "The human need to express and prove ourselves to others may result in a singularly aggressive competition which can be destructive." Another student stated that "the need to grandstand should be laid aside along with the toys of our youth." Other students emphasized the recognition of our limitations when we attempt to "prove ourselves."

Many students discussed the gender issue suggested by the excerpt, citing Rhoda's need to prove herself to her male cousins by displaying her athletic prowess. Many students asserted that "girls are often excluded from 'boy' games."

A few students illustrated only a vague connection to the topic, emphasizing the concepts of "personal triumph," "revenge," "identity," or "determination" rather than the need that human beings have to prove themselves. Some of the students who attempted to philosophize about the topic strung together general observations about human nature and tended to have somewhat "rambling" responses. Other students who took a philosophical stance were more successful, one student, for example, asserting that "Even though the odds are against us, many of us will attempt that which is seemingly impossible. This self-testing is an essential ingredient in achieving maturity."

Most students recounted experiences from their own lives in responding to the assignment. Many of the responses were sports-related; many students wrote about academic achievement. Some students wrote about music and art.

Students used examples from literature to support their opinions, citing, for example, *Death of a Salesman*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Jurassic Park*, "The Scarlet Ibis," "The Red Dress," "Harrison Bergeron," and "The Verger." Some students used examples from films such as *High Noon*, *Shine*, and *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* to support their opinions.

Students achieving **3 Satisfactory** demonstrated a defensible understanding of the excerpt and responded to the assignment in a conventional way. Generally, students at this level formed an opinion, commented on the reading selection, and then used personal observations and experiences to support their opinion. The organizational structure of responses at this level was functional. These students displayed general control of the basics of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

Students achieving **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** interpreted the excerpt in a well-considered and even insightful way, understanding and responding to the subtleties of the excerpt. Their effectively organized responses included introductions purposefully designed to provide direction for the reader. They were able to choose words and manipulate syntax for stylistic effect, and they demonstrated competent and even confident control of Matters of Correctness.

Section II: Functional Writing

In June 1997, the Functional Writing assignment required students to assume the role of Pat Jones, the Grade 12 representative on the Nalwen High School Students' Union. They were to write a letter to Ms. Bessie Ordkurat, principal of Nalwen High School, on behalf of the present Grade 10 and Grade 11 classes at Nalwen High School, to persuade her to reverse her decision to eliminate formal graduation ceremonies.

In their letters, students were expected to use an appropriately courteous tone, to indicate their purpose for writing, to consider suggestions made by fellow students, and to use the additional information provided by members of the students' union.

Most students understood the requirements of the assignment and used an appropriately courteous tone to fulfill these requirements. Some students, however, tended to provide emotional rather than reasoned, logical responses. The rule of thumb followed by the markers was to accept a student's passionate tone, but to penalize the student if the tone degenerated into downright rudeness.

Most students, apparently recognizing the importance of synthesis, used statistics and other provided information appropriately. Many students agreed with Mr. Neal Terfdoome's comments, asserting that formal graduation is imperative for high school graduates so that they may "celebrate their transition from youth to adulthood."

Many students provided thoughtful ways to lessen the expense of graduation, including various methods of fund-raising. Many students were concerned about the needs of low-income families.

A number of students implored Ms. Ordkurat to remember the "glorious feeling that she had when she graduated from high school."

Students achieving **3 Satisfactory** provided information sufficient to fulfill the purpose of their letters. Using an appropriate tone, they identified their purpose and stated their request, using some of the information provided. Most students at this level also provided closure.

Students achieving **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** sustained a precise awareness of audience and an appropriate, often persuasive, tone throughout. Their letters contained specific details that provided the principal with a perspective that would persuade her to consider reversing her decision to eliminate formal graduation ceremonies.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication

The June 1997 photograph caption reads "International Expedition at the North Pole, 1993." In the photograph (taken from above), a circle of people, holding hands, moves in a counter-clockwise motion. The setting is stark and cold. Two flag poles are connected by a rope or cable. On this rope or cable, flags from different nations are suspended.

It is encouraging to note that more students than in the past attempted to form generalizations about the meaning of the photograph. Students developed generalizations such as "When political issues are placed aside, nations may join together and accomplish amazing feats collectively," "The idea of a unified stand among countries has been a dream of many people," "When we work together, anything is possible," and "This group of people has been united to perform an extraordinary task; they form a circle in a display of solidarity."

Many students provided appropriate, often passionate conclusions such as "The photographer is looking down from the top of the world. From an almost God-like vantage point, he captures the effect of many nations of the world dancing in harmony. These people can withstand the barren cold together; surely we can join together in harmony at home," and "These people have shown the world that by putting aside our differences, we make life richer for everyone. We owe these people a thank-you for their willingness to serve as symbols of all that is right with the world."

Very few students used the photograph as a springboard for their own narratives.

Students achieving **3 Satisfactory** interpreted the photograph in a conventional way, using generalized details for support. Some students commented upon choices such as juxtaposition, camera angle, and colour contrast.

Students achieving **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** provided well-considered interpretations of the photograph. These students explained how the details in the photograph and the photographer's choices (for example, cropping, perspective, and the use of symbolism) reinforced their interpretations.

Question-by-Question Results

Question	Key	Difficulty*
1	D	71.7
2	B	79.9
3	D	89.8
4	D	75.0
5	B	76.6
6	A	85.2
7	C	82.3
8	B	73.6
9	C	40.3
10	A	70.5
11	D	58.5
12	B	83.2
13	B	47.4
14	C	51.8
15	D	80.9
16	C	78.9
17	D	74.5
18	A	66.3
19	C	80.1
20	B	55.5
21	C	72.1
22	A	83.3
23	A	68.9
24	B	56.6
25	A	54.4
26	B	53.1
27	B	77.2
28	A	70.6
29	B	73.3
30	C	85.0
31	D	59.1
32	C	44.0
33	D	53.7
34	A	41.1
35	A	70.6
36	A	80.0
37	B	60.4
38	C	49.6
39	D	59.9
40	B	54.4
41	C	63.2
42	D	75.9
43	D	58.0
44	C	66.1
45	B	77.0
46	C	77.4
47	A	68.5
48	A	72.4
49	C	47.0
50	A	66.4
51	B	78.7
52	D	57.2
53	A	54.6
54	B	51.2
55	D	78.9
56	D	50.3
57	C	52.9
58	B	84.6
59	D	66.0
60	A	58.7
61	A	45.8
62	C	43.4
63	A	60.2
64	C	50.8
65	C	56.0
66	A	29.4
67	D	37.0
68	D	49.8
69	D	44.7
70	B	38.8

*Difficulty—percentage of students answering the question correctly

Part B: Reading

The table at the left shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. Parallel tables in the school and jurisdiction reports show the percentage of students who selected each correct alternative. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint

Part B: Reading has a value of 70 marks, one for each multiple-choice question. Each question is classified in two ways: by the curricular content being tested and by the thinking (process) skill demanded by the question. The examination blueprint illustrates the distribution of questions in June 1997 according to these classifications.

Classification by Thinking Skills					
Classification by Course Content	Literal Understanding	Inference and Application	Evaluation	Total	
Meanings (Main Ideas/ Details)	1, 68	3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 28, 29, 38, 40, 41, 42, 55, 59, 60, 64, 65, 66	8, 14, 26, 43, 56, 62, 63, 67	32 Items (23%)	
Relationships of Form and Content		12, 13, 15, 25, 31, 36, 52, 53, 54, 57, 69	7, 27, 32, 37, 61	16 Items (11%)	
Human Experience and Values		5, 6, 9, 20, 22, 30, 44, 70	2, 16, 33, 34, 35, 39, 58	15 Items (11%)	
Knowledge of Revision and Editing	47, 49	45, 46, 48, 50, 51		7 Items (5%)	
Total	4 Items (3%)	46 Items (33%)	20 Items (14%)	70 Items (50%)	

Subtest Results*

Results are in average raw scores.

Total Part B: 44.5 out of 70

Course Content

- Main Ideas/Details: 19.9 out of 32
- Relationships of Form and Content: 9.8 out of 16
- Human Experience and Values: 10.0 out of 15
- Knowledge of Revision and Editing: 4.9 out of 7

*Readers are cautioned not to compare subtest results because the subtests are not of equal difficulty. Instead, readers should compare these provincial subtest results with their own school subtest results.

Examiners' Comments

The following table gives results for six multiple-choice questions. These six questions were chosen to represent the range of difficulty (29.4 to 89.8) present in Part B. They also represent the question types for all of the course content categories that appear in the blueprint on page 5. For each question, statistics are given for three student groups. The comments following the table address some of the decisions that students may have made and some of the skills they may have used to answer these questions correctly.

Percentage of Students Correctly Answering Selected Multiple-Choice Questions

Student Group	Question Number					
	3	30	51	63	66	69
All Students	89.8	85.0	78.7	60.2	29.4	44.7
Students achieving the <i>standard of excellence</i> (80% or higher, or A) on the whole examination	98.5	98.2	98.2	95.6	57.3	83.8
Students achieving the <i>acceptable standard</i> who received between 50% and 64%, or C, on the whole examination	89.2	85.0	75.6	49.1	22.4	32.2

Question 3 was one of a set of eight questions on the short story "Jczebel Jessie" by Harry J. Boyce.

3. The word "vagaries" (line 64) refers to Jessie's

- A. sensitive nature
- B. physical features
- C. extreme curiosity
- D. unpredictable behaviour

Question 3 was classified under the Reporting Category *Meanings (Main Ideas/Details)*. (See page 5.) It was the easiest question on Part B and was answered correctly by most of the students who wrote in June 1997. Fully 98.5% of the students who achieved the standard of excellence answered correctly; 96.2% of the students who scored between 65% and 79% on the exam answered correctly; 89.2% of the students who scored between 50% and 64% answered correctly, and 72.5% of the students who failed the examination answered correctly.

It is important to note that the word "vagaries" is not likely to be in the lexicons of many English 33 students. To answer question 3 correctly, students had to understand the context within which the word was used—in essence, the context of the entire story. That such a large proportion of the students were able to do this is significant.

Question 30 was one of a set of nine questions on an excerpt from *Ring of Bright Water* by Gavin Maxwell.

30. Mijbil tears the zinc lining to shreds (line 107) because he is

- A. searching for food
- B. searching for his favourite toys
- C. panic-stricken at being confined
- D. uncomfortable because of the lack of air

Question 30 was classified under the Reporting Category *Human Experience and Values*. It was answered correctly by most of the students—98.2% who achieved the standard of excellence, 96.4% who scored between 65% and 79%, and 85.0% who scored between 50% and 64%. Even 52.0% of the students who scored below 50% on the examination answered question 30 correctly.

To answer question 30 correctly, students had to empathize with Mijbil, the pet otter that acts as one of the characters in the excerpt. Students were able to put themselves in Mijbil's place and imagine the panic that he felt after he was confined in a small transportation box. Most students were able to understand that Mijbil tears the zinc lining of the box to shreds because he is trying to escape.

Question 51 was one of a set of seven questions that were designed to test students' knowledge of revision and editing. These questions were classified under the Reporting Category *Knowledge of Revision and Editing*. In answering questions such as this, students are required to make decisions about appropriate revisions to a piece of writing.

51. Robin adds a short final sentence to paragraph 6 in order to provide

- A. contrast
- B. emphasis
- C. repetition
- D. clarification

Question 51 proved to be a fairly easy question: 98.2% of the students who achieved the standard of excellence on the exam answered correctly, as did 91.1% of the students who scored between 65% and 79%, 75.6% of the students who scored between 50% and 64%, and 48.6% of the students who scored below 50%.

To answer question 51 correctly students, had to understand the rhetorical effect of Robin's addition of a short final sentence to her oral report. Most students were able to detect that the length of the sentence, the exclamation point at the end of the sentence, and the sentence's content all signalled Robin's attempt to appeal to her audience through emphasis.

Questions 63, 66, and 69 were three of a set of twelve questions on the short story "The Fatalist" by I. B. Singer. As a set, these twelve questions provided a challenge for the students writing Part B in June 1997.

63. The best example of "what the Germans call *schlagfertig*" (line 59) is

- A. "'It's fated that I should tell you that you're an idiot'" (line 66)
- B. "'I am to be Ozer Rubinstein's, not yours'" (lines 73–74)
- C. "'I have a game for you that's even more dangerous'" (lines 77–78)
- D. "'If it's fated that you live, you will live and have nothing to fear'" (lines 82–83)

Question 63 was classified under the reporting category *Meanings (Main Ideas/Details)*. It was a "best answer" question in that each of the alternatives was partially correct. To select the best answer, students had to weigh each alternative carefully and choose the alternative that the context of the story suggested was the best example of *schlagfertig*.

Question 63 proved to be a highly discriminating question: 95.6% of the students who achieved the standard of excellence on the examination answered correctly, as did 79.3% of the students who scored between 65% and 79%. However, only 49.1% of the students who scored between 50% and 64% and only 28.5% of the students who scored below 50% answered correctly.

Answering question 63 correctly required some fairly complex thinking. The meaning of the word *schlagfertig* is indicated in the story itself, in the description of Heyele Minz that is given by the secretary of the Young Zionist organization in lines 58 to 59—"But Heyele was choosy. She found something wrong in everybody. She had a sharp tongue, what the Germans call *schlagfertig*." To answer correctly, students had to recall this definition and then recognize Heyele's sharpness of tongue in her use of the word "idiot" coupled with her sharpness of wit in ironically using Benjamin Schwartz's belief in fatalism against him.

66. Considering Heyele's reaction, as related by the secretary (lines 148 to 151), the reader assumes that Heyele marries Benjamin Schwartz because

- A. she has made a sacred vow
- B. she realizes that she cares for him
- C. he has heroically risked his life for her
- D. he is more courageous than Ozer Rubinstein

Question 66 was classified under the reporting category *Meanings (Main Ideas/Details)*. It was the most difficult question on Part B—only 29.4% of the students answered correctly. It was even a relatively difficult question for the students who achieved the standard of excellence on the exam since only 57.3% of these students answered question 66 correctly. In addition, only 38.0% of the students scoring between 65% and 79% on the examination answered correctly, as did only 22.4% of the students scoring 50% to 64%. Only 14.9% of the students who failed the examination managed to answer question 66 correctly.

It is interesting to note that alternative B was chosen by a fairly large proportion of each of the student groups—25.2% of the students who achieved the standard of excellence selected alternative B, as did 34.5% of the students who scored between 65% and 79%, 36.7% of the students who scored between 50% and 64%, and 36.2% of the students who scored below

50%. Alternative C was also a popular choice, but not for students achieving the standard of excellence—only 15.3% chose alternative C.

To answer question 66 correctly, the student had to consider Heyele Minz's reaction after Benjamin Schwartz had tempted fate on the railway tracks and survived. The secretary tells us in lines 149 to 150 that "Heyele ran up to me, put her arms around me, and started to cry. It was more than a cry, it was like the howling of a beast." This reaction indicates that Heyele does not really care for Benjamin. While she does not want to see Benjamin dead, she is upset that she has lost the contest and must now marry Benjamin. This is why she runs to the secretary for comfort rather than to Benjamin, and this is why she howls like a beast.

It may be that many of the students who answered question 66 incorrectly ignored the first part of the question's stem, "Considering Heyele's reaction, as indicated by the secretary," and did not bother to reread lines 148 to 151.

69. The ironic twist in the story is indicated by

- A. "She married him?" (line 154)
- B. "I guess the engineer managed to halt the train in time" (line 156)
- C. "Is he still a fatalist?" (line 161)
- D. "Not for Heyele" (line 164)

Question 69 was classified under the Reporting Category *Relationships of Form and Content*. In spite of its difficulty, it was a highly discriminating question: 83.8% of the students who achieved the standard of excellence answered correctly, as did 61.4% of the students who scored 65% to 79% on the examination. Only 32.2% of the students who scored between 50% and 64% and 20.2% of the students who scored below 50% managed to answer question 69 correctly, however. Many students who scored below 65% on the examination appear to have guessed at question 69.

To answer question 69 correctly, students had to understand the concept of irony and apply this understanding to the outcome of the story. Benjamin Schwartz *may* still be a fatalist, but the secretary's concluding words remind the reader that Schwartz *did* make a choice, one that he lived to regret. The fact that he would not make the same choice again is both situationally and philosophically ironic. Irony is a difficult concept for English 33 students. Since much of the effect of "The Fatalist" relies on irony, this may explain why this set of twelve questions was difficult.

Comparison of Students' Results on Parts A and B

While it is not intended that Parts A and B of the English 33 Diploma Examination be considered separate exams, it is interesting to compare the distribution of scores on the two parts of the examination.

	Part A	Part B
A	5.8%	18.8%
B	26.6%	30.6%
C	53.9%	29.8%
F	13.7%	20.8%

In June 1997, considerably more students were awarded scores in the "A" category on Part B of the examination than on Part A. The scarcity of scores of 80% and above on Part A does not signal a new phenomenon; in the past, few students have scored at this level on Part A.

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